



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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LARGE SUPPLIES OF FISH AVAILABLE TO RELIEVE FOOD SHORTAGES

Fish may again prove an important buffer in the national food situation, according to a report from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

With stocks of frozen fishery products above average for this time of the year and with substantial supplies available through imports and increases in fishing activities, the Service reported that fishery products can provide an important source of relief for shortages in other protein foods.

Holdings of frozen fish and shellfish in public freezers in the United States and Alaska totaled 134 million pounds on January 1, 1948. Although this was 13 percent below the record quantity held on January 1, 1947, it was 12 percent above the five-year average for this date.

Among the items held in greatest quantity were 30 million pounds of fillets, 18 million pounds of shrimp, 14 million pounds of halibut, 13 million pounds of salmon, 11 million pounds of round and dressed whiting, 8 million pounds of round mackerel, and about 2 million pounds each of scallops, whitefish, and lake herring. Shrimp, mackerel, and whiting were held in considerably larger quantities than a year ago while fillets, salmon, and lake herring were substantially below a year ago.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials pointed out that the fishing industry is one of the few important elements in the food field capable of expanding its production at the present time. Because of improved facilities and equipment, the potential productive capacity of the United States fisheries is greater than ever before. Nearly 1300 vessels have been added to the fleet during the past year. This was about 4 times as many as were added in an average pre-war year.

The volume of production during 1947, which was approximately 4.4 billion pounds, the pre-war average, was affected by the failure of some markets to absorb a larger supply. The Service predicted that a more favorable market in 1948 would spur fishermen to increased activity and with usual operating conditions, a record catch could be expected.

Imports, too, provide a source of fish for domestic use if increased quantities become necessary. Fillets from Newfoundland, Iceland, and Canada, which in 1946 totaled 49 million pounds, declined to 33.7 million pounds in 1947 as a result of less favorable market conditions. Production facilities in these countries were expanded during the war and their maximum capacity is far from being utilized.